

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

REPORT OF THE CENTRAL PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE OF THE L.C.C.

The Central Public Health Committee of the London County Council at the meeting of the Council on February 24th made a report on its work since April 1st, 1930, when the Council, under the Local Government Act of 1929, became responsible for the transferred hospital services.

The Committee state that the reference to them of powers and duties under the Act "comprises in general the treatment of the sick poor in hospital, the district (domiciliary) medical service and the institutional care of children under the age of three years separated from their parents. It includes the provision, classification and management of hospitals, conveyance of cases to and from hospitals, laboratory services, training of nurses and midwives in connection with hospitals and the direction of a large staff.

The Change Over.

"The problems and difficulties of the change over and the period immediately ensuing were met and surmounted with a minimum of disturbance, the task of the central organisation, strengthened for the purpose, being greatly assisted by the co-operation of the transferred officers. This result was not achieved without the necessity for consideration by us of a number of complex questions, due in many cases to the variety of practice of the late authorities and the need for settling a common practice for the future. Inevitably the only practicable course in many instances has been to sanction continuance of existing arrangements for a period pending consideration of the best standard for the whole service." The existing hospitals transferred from the late Metropolitan Asylums Board were 33 with approximate accommodation for 13,944 patients, the existing hospitals and institutions transferred from the late boards of guardians 41 with approximate accommodation for 27,170 patients, and two hospitals acquired or brought into use on or after 1st of April, 1930, with approximate accommodation for 820 patients.

"The total is, therefore," say the Committee, "76 hospitals and institutions with 41,984 beds. Of these, 20 hospitals are situated outside the county. To show the magnitude of the service this represents, it may be stated that, while there are about 100 voluntary hospitals in the county of London, many are small and the total accommodation is in the neighbourhood of 14,000 beds."

The Committee state further that they have approved standard styles and patterns for nurses' uniforms, and scales of allowance of the various articles which, while costing no more than at present, will be more satisfactory. Arrangements have also been made for a standard badge inscribed with the name of the hospital to be issued to each nurse.

The Report covers a stupendous piece of work and it is quite impossible for us to deal with it in detail. We have therefore restricted ourselves for the most part to that which concerns the nursing profession.

The Domiciliary Nursing of the Sick Poor.

The Committee state "The domiciliary nursing of the sick poor is an essential corollary to an efficient district medical service and a comprehensive survey has been prepared and published of district nursing in London. The survey emphasises the very great value of the services given by the district nurses. None of the late boards of guardians employed directly nurses for this purpose, but depended on voluntary nursing associations to whose funds they made annual donations. The basis upon which these donations were made was that the services rendered were

such as would have fallen upon the late guardians but for the voluntary associations. At an early stage we received a deputation from the Central Council for District Nursing, who were desirous of ascertaining the Council's intentions in regard to this service. The services of the district nursing associations are also utilised by the metropolitan borough councils for the nursing of patients with infectious diseases and tuberculosis and maternity and child welfare cases; and also by the Council in connection with the school medical service. We are at the present time discussing the position with representatives of the metropolitan borough councils and of voluntary nursing associations with the object of evolving, if possible, an agreed scheme which will put the method of remuneration for the services rendered on, as far as practicable, a uniform and regular basis—an arrangement obviously to the advantage of the nursing associations—and will, we hope, tend to the extension and development of voluntary district nursing. In the meantime we have agreed to payments being made to the various nursing associations for 1930-31 on the same basis as in 1929 by the late guardians.

Staff of the Hospital, etc., Services.

"The total staff of the transferred hospitals and ambulance service was nearly 19,000. This includes whole time and part time officers, but not the general medical practitioners who carry out district medical services.

"The grade of staff most urgently requiring to be dealt with was the nursing staff numbering about 10,000. Provisional proposals for new scales were prepared and after consultation with the other committees of the Council employing nursing staff and with the associations of employees concerned we were able, before the summer recess, 1930, to submit for the approval of the Council scales of salaries and conditions of service for the nursing staff, and we have reason to think that they have given general satisfaction. The immense task of applying these new scales individually to each member of the staff concerned and adjusting each officer's appropriate position on the new scales is being proceeded with as rapidly as possible.

Shortage of Candidates for the Nursing Profession.

"The shortage of candidates for the nursing profession had in the past been felt in the public hospitals in London as well as elsewhere. The settlement of uniform conditions has already had its effect in the increasing numbers of applications for entry as probationers to the Council's service. Special steps have been taken to stimulate recruiting, including advertising. An officer has been specially appointed for a period of three years to undertake duties in connection with recruitment of nursing and domestic staff.

"The normal staffing of nurses at the hospitals as taken over was found to be inadequate. Questions of accommodation and cost make it impracticable for steps to be taken at once to remedy this state of affairs, but the Council before Christmas agreed as an instalment to increase the normal nursing staff by 500 nurses to be employed at any of the general hospitals, etc., as circumstances require. Some of these will replace nurses who have had to be engaged from nursing co-operations for temporary duty."

PREVALENCE OF CEREBRO-SPINAL FEVER.

The Ministry of Health has issued the following statement: In view of the public notice which recent reports of cerebro-spinal (or "spotted") fever have received (particularly those relating to cases in Army and Air Force stations), it is well that it should be understood that periodical increases in the occurrences of this relatively rare disease are not unusual. Cerebro-spinal fever has been recognised and studied in this country for over

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